

# **WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**18 FEBRUARY 2019**

## **1. INVESTMENT IN SUPPORT SERVICES**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority approve the ongoing further investment within Support Services as detailed in this paper.

## **2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 This report highlights the impact of continued resource reductions and increases in work demands within some Service Support sections, as a result of funding reductions during the comprehensive spending period since 2010/11.
- 2.2 To seek approval for additional resources within the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equality (DICE), Information Communications Technology (ICT) and Intelligence and Innovation (I&I) teams.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Authority will be aware of the impact of funding reductions throughout the CSR period since 2010/11, which has resulted in efficiencies throughout all sections of West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS).
- 3.2 At a time where support services are operating with a 'lean' model, the potential to transform services delivered to local communities relies on the Service's ability to explore opportunities, both internally and externally. The investment set out in this paper places a heavy emphasis on roles which will enable more innovative and digital solutions to help people, systems and process to become more efficient and effective.

- 3.3 In the Authority meetings on 17 September 2018 and 19 November 2018, options were considered in order to meet the shortfall in the Financial Efficiency Plan. At these meetings, it was also recognised that investment would be required in a number of areas in support services.
- 3.4 Since that time further work has been undertaken to establish those support service areas requiring investment, which are reflected in the specific sections below.
- 3.5 The DICE, ICT and Intelligence & Innovation investment directly enables more efficient ways of working and increases capacity. All of which enhance assertive, effective and safe firefighting, reducing risk, increased wellbeing, diversity and ensuring we meet our legislative requirements.
- 3.6 If budget underspends occur, they would be utilised in the first instance to balance the ongoing investment set out within this paper. Only where this is not possible, will any shortfall be met through flexible management of fleet availability based upon risk. Any subsequent effect on front line services will increase risk to our communities.

#### 4. **DICE**

- 4.1 Since September 2017, WMFS have been operating a new approach to the recruitment of firefighters, moving away from campaign-based recruitment. Firefighter recruitment activity is now driven by a sustained approach to positive action, focusing attention on generating a candidate pool who are nurtured through selection.
- 4.2 The Watch Commander (WC) A role is responsible for the attraction and initial selection of applicants for firefighter recruitment, working in partnership with colleagues at the Fire Service College and marketing company, Thinkology. Working alongside other DICE team members the role drives the positive action agenda, implementing a range of initiatives to ensure that our applicant pool is diverse.
- 4.3 We have developed a sophisticated approach to our marketing with dynamic advertisements that change following scrutiny of analytical data and monitoring of success rates.

- 4.4 Positive action intervention is proving to be successful. We are seeing more of our under-represented groups engaging with positive action and going on to be successful during selection. As an indicator of this success, the pre-recruitment programme that commenced in April 2018 was completed by 15 women. Of these, 11 went on to be offered a position on the Trainee Firefighter Development Programme. It is the intention to run a further programme early 2019 which will be exclusive to BAME candidates.
- 4.5 WMFS have challenging targets for the recruitment of both women and BAME firefighters and currently we are seeing huge success in relation to these targets. Since April 2018 WMFS have employed 54 trainee firefighters of which 25 (46%) are women and 15 (28%) are BAME.
- 4.6 In reviewing further, the requirements in supporting new entrants into the organisation, the WC position will support the tracking of new entrant firefighters, understanding performance levels during training, as well as during the early stages of their career. The position will also support other DICE activity. There is the need for us to increase representation of both women and BAME employees at supervisory, middle and strategic management levels and the WC will drive positive action activity internally, to address and seek to change the demographic profile of our management teams.
- 4.7 Our approach to the assessment of candidates has developed over the last 12 months and those who are successful during the initial stages of online assessment, are invited to attend an assessment day.
- 4.8 The assessment day allows assessors to observe how a candidate performs in simulated reality. It is essential that our assessors for firefighter recruitment are diverse and every effort is made to ensure that the make-up of the panels are reflective of the communities that we serve. It is also important that our service delivery employees are directly involved with the recruitment of new firefighters. This creates an open and transparent approach to the process and gives our employees the opportunity to be directly involved in shaping the future face of the Fire Service.

- 4.9 Currently the assessors who carry out this role do so whilst off duty. These are normally Firefighters, Crew Commanders and Watch Commanders.
- 4.10 In the last 12-months more than 400 candidates have attended an assessment centre. Support for positive action and recruitment activity has been largely run on the goodwill of our staff and additional resourcing and funding should now be considered.
- 4.11 Embedding this work through the creation of a Watch Commander A post supported by Assessors roles is reliant upon an annual investment of £59k commencing 2019/2020.

## 5. **ICT**

- 5.1 Digital is an enabler across all areas of the organisation, with our digital agenda being instrumental in organisational transformation. Digital work underpins the delivery of The Plan with a high number of key projects reliant on technological solutions to deliver more efficient and effective ways of working.
- 5.2 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) has been identified as a strategic platform for delivering our digital agenda. However, our current ERP systems are now in need of replacement.
- 5.3 ERP is the collective name for a wide range of back office applications that are essential across both Service Delivery and Service Support. Our current ERP systems requiring a refresh include:
- Human Resources, Occupational Health
  - Time and Attendance
  - Training and Competence
  - Procurement
  - Finance
  - Payrolls
  - Business Intelligence.

- 5.4 The need to implement replacement ERP systems is based upon 3 main areas, namely:
- Replacing outdated systems reduces the associated risks.
  - Modern solutions' functionality provides new enhanced digital tools to our mobile workforce.
  - Business process re-engineering improves efficiency through better ways of working.
- 5.5 As systems become older they pose greater risk to an organisation. Where obsolete versions of software cease to be supported by suppliers, they no longer provide security and legislation based updates.
- 5.6 Modernisation of the back-office systems provides timely information to our workforce through new functionality designed around mobile working. Up to date information of this nature supports our staff in having a clearer understanding of resource availability and enables individuals to interact easier regarding staffing matters.
- 5.7 Updated ERP solutions enable individuals and teams to work better and more effectively through streamlined ways of working and a joined-up approach. Removal of inefficient procedures such as manual processes and duplicate data entry releases key resources to focus on more value based activity whilst providing robust business intelligence.
- 5.8 The new provision would maximise the investment already made across ICT systems, better integrate solutions, automate repetitive transactional work and support mobile working.
- 5.9 High level market research has been carried out following engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The findings have identified that Commercial Off the Shelf (COTS) products and partners are readily available within Procurement Frameworks.
- 5.10 Based on the investigative analysis to date, an uplift of £350k p.a. is likely to be needed from 2021/2022 to provide for ERP licencing and support.

## 6. INTELLIGENCE & INNOVATION

Intelligence & Innovation (I&I) carries out a vital role through its Organisational Assurance (OA), Health, Safety and Wellbeing work. Ensuring that the organisation remains legally compliant and delivers its organisational functions in an appropriate manner aligned to corporate risk.

The role of OA has provided considerable value to the Organisation through its review of our policies, systems, structures and processes across the full range of Service functionality.

OA is a critical part of the organisation's three lines of defence risk management framework. Through its independent reviews, the team has identified areas of consideration to enable for legal compliance to be maintained, risk to be managed and mitigated, operational excellence – enabling strategy to be delivered assertively, effectively and safely.

This provision of timely and actionable intelligence enables a robust evidence base to support decision making, further improving and strengthening our internal assurance mechanism.

However, reductions within I&I have taken place since 2010 and the team has been supported annually through earmarked reserves. This approach is no longer sustainable and there is a need for an uplift of £23k p.a.

Management resources within the team have been re-aligned to Health, Safety and Wellbeing since the functionality has been transferred into I&I. Subsequently, reducing organisational assurance capability.

Further to these additional workloads being placed upon existing resources, new burdens are further increasing the overall demand upon I&I.

Examples of those demands are external pressures and influence, i.e. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspections; high profile incidents such as Grenfell and the Manchester Arena Bombing; Requirement to implement and embed National Operational Guidance.

Restructuring and new ways of working have been implemented to ensure technology and automation provide efficiencies. Beyond this improvement, further investment is needed.

The provision of appropriate levels of support for I&I through the creation of a Station Commander B and Watch Commander B post requires £120k ongoing investment.

Considered alongside the adoption of the £23k funding required to maintain the existing team, total investment for I&I equates to £143k p.a. from 2019/2020.

7. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

## 9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The estimated costs of the proposed investments are shown in the Table below:

	2019/20 £000		2020/2 1 £000		2021/22 onwards £000	
<b>DICE</b>						
WC A	45		45		45	
Assessors Costs	14		14		14	
		59		59		59
<b>ICT</b>						
Licences/Support					350	
						350
<b>I&amp;I</b>						
SC B	70		70		70	
WC B	50		50		50	
OA Costs	23		23		23	
		143		143		143
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>202</b>		<b>202</b>		<b>552</b>

9.2 There is currently no specific budget provision to meet the indicated costs.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Authority Report 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018 – Strategy Options 2019 – 2022

Authority Report 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018 – Revising The Strategy 2019 – 2022

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